

**Proposed Hillside Ordinance for the Altadena Community Standards District  
Prepared by the *ad hoc* Hillside Ordinance Committee**

There has been a growing trend among cities to establish guidelines to protect and preserve their hillsides. In fact, many of our neighboring foothill communities (Glendora, Monrovia, Sierra Madre, Pasadena, and Glendale) already have such hillside ordinances in place. The idea of formulating a proposed hillside ordinance for Altadena originated out of a public roundtable sponsored by the Altadena Heritage in October 2004. This forum identified the need for guidelines for hillside development, as well as the preliminary efforts necessary to create them. At the forum, people were invited to participate in an *ad hoc* group to write a hillside ordinance for Altadena.

In 2005, this small group began meeting. The core members of the group – those who attended most of the meetings - are from diverse backgrounds, including engineers, developers, attorneys, architects, and others. Although many are active in the community in various organizations, all served on this committee only representing themselves. The group consists of: Patty Mulligan, chair, Ken Balder, Stephanie Clements, Sameer Etman, Mark Goldschmidt, John Grech, Jr., Terry Huntsberger, Thomas Stahl, Nancy Steele, Bernice Brunswick, and Michele Zack.

We began by looking at other hillside ordinances as well as what was currently in place in the existing County Code. Staff of LA County Regional Planning and Building and Safety made presentations to explain the existing standards already in place, the process of developing our own hillside ordinance, and to discuss what had been put into place in other areas of Los Angeles County. Our next step was to identify our concerns with the existing ordinance and to incorporate changes we felt were necessary. We decided to use the recently adopted hillside ordinance for Santa Monica Mountains North as our working model. Its guidelines were reasonable, it provided for many of the changes we deemed essential, and it had the added advantage of having been previously approved by the County.

The Committee has endeavored to achieve consensus on this proposed ordinance within the diverse group and also with significant landowners in the hillsides, many of whom attended several of the meetings and provided input. We solicited additional input from these landowners through telephone calls, e-mails, and letters. Following is a summary of the proposed ordinance:

- Requires **single family residences** to obtain a CUP that would otherwise not be required in LA County (areas with a natural slope of 25% or greater).
- Requires CUP for **grading** that exceeds 2,500 cubic yards of cut or fill instead of the current standard of 100,000 cubic yards.
- All grading during the **rainy season** (October 15-April 15) requires County approved mitigation measures to prevent runoff and erosion.
- Defines **significant ridgelines** and requires a variance for building within 50 feet vertically and horizontally of significant ridgeline.
- **Remodeling** in significant ridgeline areas must comply with the above requirements, but otherwise there is no change in hillside areas from the existing ordinance.
- In significant ridgeline areas, one can **repair or replace** an existing structure if built in substantially the same location and square footage without going through the CUP process.
- Encourages the use of **design features** that maximize preservation of visual quality and community character.

The next steps for the effort are to obtain additional community input through the Altadena Town Council and its Land Use Committee. The Altadena Town Council can then vote to send the proposed ordinance to Los Angeles County with a recommendation. The ordinance must be adopted by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors before it can become law.